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Nineteenth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1492 (2003) of 18 July 2003, by which the Security Council requested me to report at regular intervals on progress made in achieving the key benchmarks that should guide the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and in the planning of subsequent phases of the withdrawal. It also provides an assessment of the security situation, as well as the overall efforts to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone since my last report (S/2003/663), of 23 June 2003.

II. Security situation

2. During the period under review, the security situation in Sierra Leone remained generally stable. There were no major incidents that threatened the prevailing stability in the country. UNAMSIL troops were put on alert after the death on 29 July of the former leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Foday Sankoh, in a Freetown hospital. However, Sankoh's death did not cause any major public reaction. The overall stability in the country has allowed UNAMSIL to complete the first stage of phase 3 of the drawdown plan (see S/2003/663, para. 37), which saw the departure of a Nigerian battalion in August 2003. It has also facilitated the process of further peace consolidation.

3. While the prevailing stability in Sierra Leone is encouraging, some of the problems highlighted in my previous reports still persist. The continuing influx of young men to the diamond mining areas of the Kono and Kenema districts remains a potential source of instability. The youth groups opposed to the participation of non-indigenous people in diamond mining have become increasingly vocal in some areas. It is encouraging to note, however, that the Government has stepped up its efforts to resolve these mining-related problems.

4. Another challenge to the consolidation of peace is the restiveness of some former elements of the Civil Defence Force (CDF), the Revolutionary United Front and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council/ex-Sierra Leone Army, who are concerned, among other issues, about indictments by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Early in August, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah met with representatives of

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the Civil Defence Force in Bo to address some of their grievances, including their claim that they were denied benefits promised during the conflict. While the meeting managed to forestall public protests, some CDF elements continue to seek the release of the former CDF National Coordinator and Minister for Internal Affairs, Sam Hinga Norman, who was indicted by the Special Court. Although CDF has retained some of its command and control structures, it does not appear to pose a serious threat to stability in the country at this time.

5. Despite those problems, UNAMSIL believes that there are no immediate internal threats to the security of Sierra Leone. The Mission has continued its drawdown in a gradual manner and has handed over security responsibilities to government forces in areas where there are relatively low security threats, mainly in the central part of the country. The Mission has already withdrawn its military contingents from the provincial towns of Kambia, Kabala, Kamakwie, Sumbuya and Pujehun and reduced their presence in other locations. Despite the Government's efforts to continue strengthening its capacity to take over security responsibilities from UNAMSIL, plans to deploy additional Sierra Leone police to areas vacated by UNAMSIL troops have been implemented only partially. So far, this has not affected the stability of the areas concerned; and UNAMSIL continues to actively monitor the security situation throughout the country.

6. Recent positive developments in Liberia will obviously have an impact on the stability of Sierra Leone. As mandated by the Security Council, UNAMSIL supported, at short notice, the deployment and initial sustainment of the first battalion and headquarters of the force of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia (ECOMIL), whose deployment started on 4 August and was completed on 19 August. UNAMSIL also provided active support to my Special Representative for Liberia and will continue to do so until the Mission in Liberia is established.

7. Although the current situation in Liberia no longer poses an immediate threat to Sierra Leone, there are some concerns that former Sierra Leonean combatants who were reported to be fighting in Liberia may try to return to Sierra Leone. It is encouraging to note that the Government of Sierra Leone is preparing a contingency plan to respond to such an eventuality.

III. Implementation of the modified status quo drawdown option

8. At the request of the Security Council, and after a careful assessment of the prevailing security situation, in my eighteenth report (S/2003/663) I presented a number of options for the remainder of the drawdown of UNAMSIL. The Security Council, in its resolution 1492 (2003), approved a "modified status quo" option, under which the completion of the withdrawal of the Mission from Sierra Leone is envisaged by December 2004. Under that option, phase 3 of the drawdown plan should be implemented in several stages.

9. During the previous phase of the drawdown, which was completed in May 2003, a total of 3,826 troops were withdrawn from the Mission, reducing troop strength from 16,900 to 13,074 personnel. Implementation of the current phase, which began in June 2003, envisages that the Mission's troop strength will be

gradually reduced to 5,000 by October 2004. The first stage of the exercise was completed in August 2003 with the departure of a Nigerian battalion from Makeni and Kamakwie in Sector Centre. This brought the Mission's troop strength down to 12,311. UNAMSIL will thoroughly evaluate the security situation at each stage.

10. Should the security environment remain favourable, the second stage of the current drawdown phase would be implemented starting in November 2003, and would see a reduction in the Mission's troop strength to 11,500 personnel. During that stage, the Mission would continue to repatriate troops from Sector Centre. During the third stage, to be implemented from December 2003 to June 2004, the entire Sector Centre will be handed over to the national security forces. The fourth stage of the exercise would run from September to October 2004. This will be one of the most critical stages in the plan, and will involve withdrawing all UNAMSIL forces from the eastern border area. As indicated earlier, at the end of that stage the Mission's troop strength would be 5,000 personnel.

IV. Benchmarks

11. As indicated in my fifteenth report to the Security Council (S/2002/987), the pace of the drawdown of UNAMSIL is to be guided by specific benchmarks. The progress achieved towards the implementation of these benchmarks is described below.

A. Strengthening the capacity of the Sierra Leone police

12. The Sierra Leone police continue to make steady progress towards assuming responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in Sierra Leone. With the support of UNAMSIL, the Commonwealth advisers, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the pace of recruitment into the police force has accelerated, and the training of new recruits has been enhanced.

13. United Nations civilian police continue to provide expert advice in key areas; a total of 126 civilian police officers are currently deployed to UNAMSIL. There are 31 United Nations civilian police trainers who participate in training new recruits and police personnel, as well as 83 mentors deployed in 17 Sierra Leone police divisions throughout the country, including Freetown. There are also several staff officers based in the Mission's headquarters, including experts on cross-border and airport policing, who provide guidance and support to the Sierra Leone police. Consultations with the Government of South Africa to identify a suitable diamond-mining police adviser continue.

14. The deployment of the remaining personnel authorized by the Security Council in resolution 1436 (2002) has not yet been recommended by the Steering Committee, owing to constraints regarding absorption capacity. That Committee coordinates the efforts to strengthen the Sierra Leone police and comprises the Sierra Leone police, UNAMSIL, and the Commonwealth police advisers. It is chaired by the Inspector General of the Sierra Leone police.

15. As a result of verification of salary payments undertaken with the support of UNAMSIL and Commonwealth advisers, the Sierra Leone police was able to

establish a credible database of its personnel. The current strength of the police force has been established at 6,241 officers. The total number of the police is steadily increasing, however, as a result of the expansion of the Police Training School funded by UNDP and DFID. A total of 384 new police officers were recruited and trained in 2002. The number of new recruits is expected to rise to more than 700 in 2003 and 2,100 in 2004. At this rate, the Sierra Leone police could reach the target level of 9,500 police personnel by the end of 2005.

16. With United Nations civilian police and Commonwealth assistance, the Sierra Leone police has assessed policing needs in all districts and prepared a plan that envisages the deployment of 2,450 additional police personnel, almost doubling the current strength of 2,900 officers deployed in the 12 districts. Priority for the deployment of additional personnel will be given to the eastern region, where potential threats to law and order linked to diamond mining, vigilante youth groups, concentration of ex-combatants and border security are assessed as being the greatest. The deployment of more than 850 additional police personnel to the three districts of Kono, Kailahun and Kenema is scheduled to be completed by October 2004. This would significantly strengthen the capacity of the Sierra Leone police to assume responsibility for internal security as UNAMSIL vacates this key area.

17. This planned deployment hinges, however, on the provision of logistic and infrastructure support. While a recent grant from DFID should enable the Government to procure some essential communications equipment and transportation, efforts are focusing on identifying funding sources for the construction of barracks for the Sierra Leone police, which at present are practically non-existent in the provinces. Police stations and barracks also continue to be built with funding from the UNAMSIL Trust Fund, as well as from UNDP and DFID. I call upon donors to make an extra effort to allow this important programme to succeed.

18. United Nations civilian police trainers, in close collaboration with Commonwealth advisers, have focused on the training of recruits, train-the-trainer programmes, and the development of manuals, as well as specialized training relating to commercial crimes, criminal intelligence services, drug prevention, forensics, Interpol procedures and other key matters. In addition, United Nations civilian police and United Nations human rights and child protection officers have conducted a nationwide training programme for Sierra Leone police personnel, particularly those attached to the Family Support Units that are entrusted with monitoring and investigating domestic violence. During the period under review, a total of 865 Sierra Leone police personnel attended workshops in various areas of policing, including professional standards and ethics, human rights, basic computer skills, community policing, family support and handling of suspects. The impact of the exercise has been closely monitored, and a full assessment is to be prepared later this year.

B. Strengthening the capacity of the armed forces

19. With invaluable bilateral assistance, the Republic of Sierra Leone armed forces have continued to enhance their effectiveness in assuming responsibility for the external security of Sierra Leone. They have also commenced downsizing the force, which should undergo a reduction in the number of its personnel from 14,000 to

10,500 by 2007. At the same time, the army has begun to reorganize its structure; and the armed forces have developed a revised concept of operations focusing on border operations and timely deployment of reserves. This approach is supported in part by the relocation and concentration of units to a smaller number of military bases set back from the border area. The plan to establish these bases has been funded by DFID and the Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence. To speed up the process of the construction of barracks, the army has retrained a number of its soldiers to carry out building work.

20. The challenges facing the armed forces, which have been highlighted in my previous reports, still persist, however. Inadequate logistics and the poor state of the army's transport fleet continued to hamper its operations. In addition, the paucity of command and control systems remains a significant weakness across the joint force and the Ministry of Defence. There is also an urgent need to improve the officer to soldier ratio, which is 1:21 at present. Currently, the Sierra Leone armed forces are at about one third below projected officer strength, which is approximately 800. The envisaged officer strength would bring the officer to soldier ratio to 1:15. Since my last report, considerable emphasis has been placed on developing officers' professional skills. Recently introduced progressive training for officers includes a literacy programme and information technology training.

21. The armed forces' ability to fill part of the role currently performed by UNAMSIL could be enhanced if mechanisms were formalized as soon as possible, which would ensure an operational interface between the Sierra Leone police and the armed forces in the event of a major internal threat to the security of the State. Furthermore, the realigning of brigade boundaries and the relocation of brigade headquarters to principal towns would also assist the development of the capability of the army.

C. Consolidation of State authority

22. Progress continues to be made in the consolidation of State authority and in the recovery efforts of the Government and its development partners throughout the country. In addition to the completion of the deployment of government officials to all districts, efforts are being made to provide them with basic facilities, equipment and other logistics to improve their effectiveness. Recently, UNDP has provided communications equipment, computers, printers, filing cabinets and typewriters to the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development and the Office of the Chief Justice. The equipment, which has been installed in all 12 districts, will facilitate the flow of information and enhance the capacity of civil authority in the districts. The Government is also addressing other constraints, such as the poor state of transportation and accommodation for district officials.

23. At the same time, the Government continues to devote attention to the extension of the judiciary and the rule of law, with the support of UNDP and DFID in particular. Magistrates' courts are now functioning in all districts, and justices of the peace and itinerant magistrates are adjudicating cases. The deployment of justices of the peace has contributed to the resumption of court proceedings throughout the country and has led to a reduction in the backlog of pending cases. The lack of magistrates to cover all district courts remains a major constraint in the effective administration of justice, however. Significant donor support and

assistance will continue to be required in this area. Legal and institutional reforms will also be needed to strengthen in a comprehensive manner the entire justice system (courts, police and prisons). To that end, the Government of the United Kingdom has allocated £25 million for a project covering the justice sector to be launched early in 2004.

24. In the meantime, the preparation of draft legislation on local government reform and decentralization is under way. The draft is expected to be reviewed by the Cabinet before final adoption by Parliament. This in turn will pave the way for the holding of municipal, town and district council elections which it is now expected will be held in the first quarter of 2004. Early passage of the bill will facilitate the commencement of necessary logistical arrangements and other requirements by the National Electoral Commission. The Commission is expected to request technical and logistical support from the United Nations. According to the Commission, a minimum period of five months will be needed prior to the date of the elections for the organization of the elections, including updating voter registration. The Commission also estimates the financial requirement for the elections at about $8 million, about half of which will be requested from donors.

25. In an effort to deal with corruption, the Government is introducing a new procurement process for government contracts and services with the assistance of UNDP and the World Bank. Two special anti-corruption judges and a prosecutor are expected to take office shortly with the assistance of the Commonwealth.

26. Following the successful launch of a new National Youth Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has finalized a comprehensive programme for young people that includes the opening of district offices in all provincial towns, recruitment and deployment of staff to the provinces and a seven-week nationwide sensitization of youth to the contents of the National Youth Policy.

D. Reintegration of ex-combatants

27. The Government has made further progress in the provision of reintegration opportunities to ex-combatants. There is an outstanding caseload of about 6,000 ex-combatants to be included in the programme, and the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration expects to complete the process on schedule by the end of December 2003. External partners, including UNAMSIL, UNDP, DFID, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation and more recently the European Union, are supporting the Committee, in order to bring the process to completion through the delivery of parallel programmes.

28. As UNAMSIL draws down, the Mission will gradually scale down its stop-gap programmes, which, through engagement in small, labour-intensive community infrastructure projects, have supported reintegration efforts for ex-combatants. To reflect the shift in focus from ex-combatants to community-based programmes, UNAMSIL is directing remaining resources, in collaboration with other development agencies, to developing capacity for the reintegration of ex-combatants in their communities. This activity is supported by United Nations Volunteers by means of a special fund and is being implemented in close collaboration with the UNDP youth engagement programme and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Sierra Leone.

29. The United Nations also continues to address the issue of residual small arms in the country. Pilot projects for the community arms collection and development programme, driven by UNDP and led by the Sierra Leone police, have been completed in four chiefdoms and are being expanded further. At the same time, the Government of Sierra Leone has established the Interim Commission on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Commission, in collaboration with the Sierra Leone police, is pursuing the legislative aspects of small arms control, including the development of a firearms licensing process.

E. Restoration of Government control over diamond mining

30. During the reporting period, the Government has further enhanced its control over diamond mining. This is reflected in a substantial increase in licensed mining and the consequent rise in legal exports that by mid-2003 had surpassed the total official exports for 2002 of $42 million. The Government is making further efforts to improve the quality and number of mine monitors in key areas and has also commenced publishing diamond export analyses on a monthly basis. There is still ample evidence of widespread illegal mining, however. Together with the Government, UNAMSIL continues to conduct joint surveys and mapping of mining sites in various parts of the country, with a view to assisting in identifying and curbing illegal mining activities.

31. To address this complex issue effectively, an institutional framework has now been put in place. While the National Security Coordination Group regularly examines security issues relating to diamond mining, a High-level Steering Committee, comprising the Ministers for Finance, Mineral Resources and the Interior, the Sierra Leone police, UNAMSIL and donor representatives, addresses all substantive issues relating to the diamond-mining sector. The Government has also established a joint oversight committee headed by the Vice-President to monitor the enforcement of existing legislation on diamond mining. Ways to support the Sierra Leone police in its new law enforcement role in the mining areas are also being considered with the assistance of the United Nations civilian police. In addition, on 27 August, President Kabbah launched the USAID-supported Kono Peace Diamond Alliance in Koidu, which seeks to introduce community-based initiatives for better and more transparent management and utilization of diamond mining.

F. Human rights, national reconciliation and justice

1. Monitoring and promoting human rights

32. Since my last report, there has been further progress in the human rights situation and the rule of law in the country. The Sierra Leone police are increasingly respecting the constitutional time limit for detention, while magistrates' courts have been hearing cases on a regular basis. This has led to a noticeable decrease in the number of persons in prolonged pre-trial detention. The improvement in the human rights situation is more visible in the provinces, where judicial coverage was particularly weak. To expand its training and capacity-building activities and to strengthen the consolidation of the rule of law across the country, the UNAMSIL Human Rights Section opened two new regional human rights offices, in Moyamba

and Kailahun, to be followed by other field offices in the districts of Bo, Kambia, Pujehun, Koinadugu and Tonkolili.

33. Notwithstanding the progress made, lack of judicial action on court cases persists in some areas. In particular, the trial of the so-called West Side Boys and former RUF members, who were arrested after the crisis of May 2000 and who have been awaiting trial without access to legal counsel since that time, has not made any significant headway. Similarly, there has been no progress in the trial related to the incident at Wellington Barracks in January 2003. The 17 persons then accused have remained in prison without any indication when they will stand trial.

2. Gender issues

34. The Human Rights Section, through its Gender Specialist, has continued actively to provide training on and advocate for gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's rights, including the elimination of domestic violence and gender-related sexual violence, in particular in support of the Sierra Leone police's Family Support Units and local Gender-based Violence Committees throughout the country. Other important initiatives include participation in the production of an advocacy package on sexual and gender-based violence in cooperation with Sierra Leonean non-governmental organizations, and a three-day workshop on women's law reform organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs.

3. Protection of children

35. As UNAMSIL draws down, it will be important to strengthen the structures and programmes of the Government of Sierra Leone and its partners in order to address the most pressing child protection concerns. In particular, these include the huge gaps in education, health care and recreation, the growing problem of street children, the rampant sexual and domestic violence against children, the poor state of the juvenile justice system, child labour, particularly in diamond mining, idle youth and youth violence and children with disabilities.

36. UNAMSIL and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are encouraging closer collaboration with the Government, the National Commission for War-Affected Children and child protection agencies in developing appropriate response strategies, including continued efforts to enhance local capacity and promote law reform for the protection of children. Of particular concern is the long-term reintegration of children associated with the fighting forces and of children separated from their families. The core reintegration programme, the successful UNICEF Community Education Investment Programme, requires urgent funding for the next school year. Programmes to address the needs of those bypassed by the formal disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, particularly girls, continue to be developed. UNICEF and UNAMSIL are working with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court to ensure that these institutions help to safeguard the rights and well-being of children.

37. Within UNAMSIL, the mainstreaming of child protection has continued with the systematic training of military personnel and the development by the contingents of plans of action in child protection, which include community support projects benefiting children. In addition, close collaboration has been established with the military and the United Nations civilian police. To that end, a child protection focal

point has been designated at every military observer team site, and the United Nations civilian police have included child protection concerns in their training and mentoring activities. UNAMSIL is also working with ECOWAS to address cross-border child protection concerns.

4. Truth and Reconciliation Commission

38. On 6 August, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ended its four-month period of public hearings, both individual and thematic. The hearings, which were largely well received in all 12 districts and were at times aired live on Radio UNAMSIL, have helped to create awareness and a much more favourable public opinion towards the Commission. Although the majority of witnesses who came forward to testify before the Commission were victims of the conflict, a number of perpetrators, including ex-combatants, also provided testimony. This enabled the Commission to stage numerous symbolic reconciliation sessions between perpetrators who were prepared to repent of their actions and victims who were willing to forgive. The Commission is scheduled to conclude its operations in October after the submission of its final report. The Commission is unlikely to complete its remaining workload within the stated period, however. Discussions are currently ongoing among the Commission members, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Sierra Leone to seek an extension of the mandate of the Commission.

39. A number of ministers, leaders of political parties, former presidents and other principal actors during and after the war have appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As a last witness on 5 August, President Kabbah gave a comprehensive presentation of developments during the war. He further praised the work of the Commission and reiterated his Government's support to follow-up mechanisms, such as a permanent National Human Rights Commission. In discussions with UNAMSIL, the Government has agreed to pursue the establishment of such a commission jointly with UNAMSIL and representatives of civil society.

5. Special Court

40. The Special Court for Sierra Leone continued with pre-trial hearings for the nine individuals indicted for war crimes. Some of the Special Court's initial indictments include crimes committed against children. On 30 July, the Special Court announced that the former RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, had passed away on 29 July in a Freetown hospital after a protracted illness. The Court indicated that Mr. Sankoh, who was awaiting trial, had died of natural causes.

41. In my last report, I informed the Council that the Special Court had indicted the President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, who later resigned from the Presidency and left the country on 11 August. The previous Government of Liberia has filed an appeal against the Government of Sierra Leone before the International Court of Justice on the indictment against Charles Taylor.

42. UNAMSIL continued to provide essential security and logistical support to the Special Court. On 10 August, the Court transferred the remaining eight indictees from its detention facility at Bonthe Island to the permanent site of the Court in Freetown. UNAMSIL, jointly with the Sierra Leone armed forces and police, provided assistance in the move. The Mission has deployed two platoons to the Court premises in Freetown on a permanent basis to augment the Court's security.

The Registrar has been actively consulting with UNAMSIL and other agencies on measures to promote women's rights in the context of the Court's work, including the provision of gender training for judges and the media, and gender-sensitive witness protection programmes which would include trauma and psychological counselling. At the same time, Radio UNAMSIL has provided the Court with airtime on a weekly basis for its outreach programme.

6. HIV/AIDS

43. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1308 (2000), UNAMSIL continued to raise awareness among its military and civilian personnel on the impact of HIV/AIDS. Since the launch in March 2003 of a joint initiative by the Secretariat, UNAMSIL and United Nations agencies on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone, some 150 military personnel have been trained as peer trainers on HIV/AIDS, focusing on prevention, knowledge, attitude and behaviour change. The HIV/AIDS theme group, chaired by UNICEF and composed of United Nations agencies, UNAMSIL, non-governmental organizations, the National Commission for Social Action and the National HIV/AIDS secretariat, is preparing for an HIV/AIDS prevalence survey in the near future and is developing a national HIV/AIDS plan.

V. Humanitarian, recovery and development efforts

44. Following the verification exercise undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other partners in May 2003, provisional results reveal an overall 10 per cent reduction in the number of Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone. As at 23 August, the number of Liberians in camps was 54,298, and there was a caseload in the urban areas of Bo and Kenema of 7,886 refugees, and an estimated 4,000 in border areas, bringing the total number of confirmed refugees in Sierra Leone to 66,184.

45. Ensuring appropriate levels of service provision in camps remains a challenge, especially during the rainy season when morbidity rates increase rapidly. In general, conditions in the camps are satisfactory and there is sufficient capacity in camps and way-station facilities for 8,000 additional refugees. Recent upheavals in Monrovia have had rather limited impact along the border regions. Throughout the month of June, slightly more than 2,500 Liberians crossed over into Kailahun district, some of whom are thought to be relatives and followers of surrendering Liberian soldiers. In the first week of August, only very small numbers of returnees and refugees entered Sierra Leone across the Mano River Bridge.

46. At the same time, the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees from Guinea slowed down and was eventually suspended with the onset of heavy rains. Overland repatriation from Guinea is expected to resume late in November or early in December when road conditions improve. There are currently slightly more than 15,000 registered refugees remaining in camps in Guinea awaiting repatriation in the latter part of 2003.

47. Repatriation from Liberia, however, recommenced for a short period on 4 July, with an emergency evacuation of Sierra Leonean refugees from Monrovia by sea. Some 1,250 Sierra Leoneans were repatriated before the operation was terminated towards the end of July because of insecurity. With the deployment of ECOMIL and the withdrawal of rebels of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy

from Bushrod Island in Liberia, repatriation by sea from Monrovia was resumed on 13 August. The first boat carrying 206 Sierra Leoneans arrived in Freetown on 19 August. Operations are expected to continue throughout September.

48. Meanwhile, joint support to the national recovery process continues. UNAMSIL, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP supported a national data collection exercise with all District Recovery Committees in June. The information gathered will be utilized to monitor progress on the national recovery benchmarks and to plan future recovery and longer-term interventions.

49. The Government, supported by donors, has made considerable progress in stabilizing the economy. In 2002, real GDP increased by an estimated 6.6 per cent, marking the third year of sustained economic recovery, and it is expected to maintain a similar level in 2003. Post-conflict recovery is being sustained by the dynamic growth of donor-financed imports, large-scale resettlement and reconstruction activities, major increases in land under cultivation, growing mining activity and domestic commerce, and increasing investor confidence, as well as growing remittances, investments and tourism on the part of the large Sierra Leone expatriate community, and broadly sound fiscal and monetary policies.

50. The 2003 macroeconomic programme targets real GDP growth of 6.5 per cent, and modest inflation of about 3 per cent. The officially registered output of diamonds rose by 84 per cent during the first quarter of 2003; this originated entirely from alluvial diamond mining. A major kimberlite diamond mine is expected to begin producing in the third quarter of 2003. Substantial progress has also been made in readying rutile mining for renewed production at the beginning of 2004.

51. As indicated in my previous report to the Council, fiscal and monetary policies will need to be carefully managed to blunt the effect of oil price increases on the recovery, prices, balance of payments and real incomes. After declining in 2002, the rate of inflation rose to 6.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2003, largely because of the spike in oil prices. The increases in the domestic prices of petroleum products ranged from 23 per cent for gasoline to 36 per cent for kerosene. At the same time, gross international reserves decreased sharply in the first part of 2003, then rebounded in May-June, but were still 8 per cent below the level of December 2002. The exchange rate depreciated about 6 per cent during the first quarter of 2003, and also contributed to price inflation. If monetary policies are well managed in a consistent manner, the recent rise in the price index may not translate into sustained inflation. Preliminary data indicate that the overall fiscal deficit was kept well below the programmed level.

52. The United Nations country team, in particular UNICEF, UNHCR, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, UNDP, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Bank, is pursuing a multidimensional and community-based approach in support of the Government's strategies and efforts. This approach aims at extending primary health-care services to the poor and returning populations; increasing access to quality primary education, particularly for girls; raising the level of HIV/AIDS awareness; significantly enhancing access to safe water and sanitation; helping communities to rebuild the country's war-damaged housing; and supporting capacity-building for national institutions. Under the framework of the "4R

Initiative" (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction), the United Nations country team is in the process of establishing transition support teams to ensure continuing integrated planning and programme implementation as recovery advances.

53. Although substantial progress has been made, much remains to be done to meet the ongoing recovery challenges of the country. UNAMSIL, through its Trust Fund, continues to finance a wide range of activities, covering school rehabilitation/construction, construction of magistrates' courts, police stations and district offices, skills training and agricultural projects, trauma healing, the reintegration of ex-combatants and child soldiers into society, and the supply of equipment and furniture to help build the capacity of key institutions. To date, 73 projects have been undertaken with contributions from the Governments of Canada, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and Sweden amounting to a total of $1.3 million. In addition, UNAMSIL is strengthening civil-military cooperation with local communities through the implementation of quick-impact projects by military contingents.

54. At the end of June, a Joint Humanitarian Review Mission comprising the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other donor partners visited the subregion. This was followed by a regional meeting in Dakar on 17 and 18 July, at which the participants sought to develop a joint regional strategy to address issues of protection, coordination, food aid, health, demobilization and peace-building. The United Nations, non-governmental organizations and donors are committed to working more closely together to address the broader issues and problems in the subregion.

VI. Financial aspects

55. The General Assembly, by its resolution 57/291 B of 18 June 2003, appropriated the amount of $543.4 million gross for the maintenance of UNAMSIL for the financial period from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004. Therefore, should the Security Council approve my recommendation, set out in paragraph 64 below, as to the extension of the mandate of UNAMSIL, the cost for the operation and maintenance of the Mission during the extension period will be limited to resources approved by the General Assembly.

56. As at 31 July 2003, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNAMSIL amounted to $181.7 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1,306.2 million.

VII. Observations and recommendations

57. During the period under review the further progress achieved towards peace consolidation in Sierra Leone and the overall security environment in the country have enabled UNAMSIL to continue the progressive drawdown of its military component as approved by the Security Council. The responsibility for national security in some parts of the country is being shifted to the Government of Sierra Leone whose efforts aimed at augmenting the overall capacity of its national police

and armed forces are encouraging. Despite these encouraging developments, however, serious challenges remain.

58. The lack of adequate equipment and infrastructure remains a critical element in enhancing the capacity of the Sierra Leone police and army and in enabling them to effectively take over the responsibility for security throughout the country, especially in the border areas. Much also remains to be done to strengthen the presence of the Sierra Leone police in the areas to be vacated by UNAMSIL, especially in the potentially volatile eastern region of the country. Once again, I urge the Government and its international partners to expeditiously address the logistical and infrastructure needs of both the police and the army.

59. The current planning to enhance the capacity of the Sierra Leone police indicates that the target of bringing the strength of the Sierra Leone police to its pre-war level of 9,500 may be achieved by the end of 2005, a year after UNAMSIL is expected to leave Sierra Leone. UNAMSIL will continue to monitor closely and to report on progress in the effectiveness of the police force, as well as on its impact on overall conditions in the country.

60. The Government of Sierra Leone has made commendable efforts to address the serious issues relating to the control of diamond mining. Action must be taken rapidly, however, to ensure that the national diamond industry is effectively regulated for the benefit of the whole country. The establishment of a computerized data bank on mining licences, as well as the review of incentives and remuneration for field staff of the Ministry of Mineral Resources and the use of banking channels for all diamond trading transactions, would be a very important step in this regard. The Government's efforts to progressively empower the Sierra Leone police to enforce the diamond-mining and trading legislation are equally vital. It is expected that these efforts will be vigorously pursued so as to forestall any potential threats to stability arising from the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. In this regard, I urge Member States to make available to UNAMSIL experienced candidates for the key post of diamond-mining police adviser.

61. As has already been pointed out in my previous reports, the continued existence of the Civil Defence Force structure has the potential of undermining the long-term stability of the country. The recent appeals by the group members for the release of their former National Coordinator are a reminder of the potential danger that the Civil Defence Force may pose to various communities. The Government should therefore ensure that the CDF structure is completely dismantled.

62. In the justice sector, the Government of Sierra Leone has made steady progress in improving the situation of human rights and extending the rule of law. Its initiative to use justices of the peace — to fill in where magistrates are not yet available — should be commended. Nonetheless, serious problems persist in the effective administration of justice. I appeal to donors to provide funding for this critical area and to support the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission.

63. The Government and people of Sierra Leone are to be commended for the progress made in the reintegration of former combatants. The intention of the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration to complete the programme by the end of 2003 deserves the encouragement and support of the international community. The completion of the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration programme on schedule would constitute an outstanding success for all concerned, including UNAMSIL, and could serve as a useful example for other countries of the subregion, such as Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

64. In the light of the above, and given the need to continue the gradual drawdown of UNAMSIL without jeopardizing the security situation in Sierra Leone, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNAMSIL for a further period of six months, until 31 March 2004.

65. The recent important developments in Liberia have given rise to cautious optimism about the future. It is hoped that the comprehensive peace agreement signed in Accra will lead to more stability in Liberia in the short term, and that it will open the way to free and fair elections. An unregulated return to Sierra Leone of former combatants who may have been involved in the fighting in Liberia would however be a matter of serious concern.

66. In conclusion, I should like to express my deep appreciation to the Security Council and troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as to ECOWAS and donor countries for their unwavering support to the peace consolidation process in Sierra Leone. I also wish to pay tribute to my former Special Representative, Oluyemi Adeniji, for the outstanding contribution he has made towards the restoration of peace in Sierra Leone. Finally, I wish to express my deep appreciation to all UNAMSIL military and civilian personnel, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations for their important contribution to the impressive progress made in Sierra Leone.

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